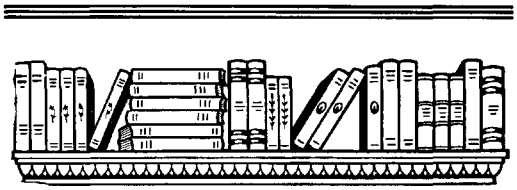

The Engineer's Bookshelf

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PRIVATE HARGROVE

I was highly amused and in some instances downright provoked when I read *See Here, Private Hargrove.* When Marion Hargrove first published his book about two months ago, I gave it a casual glance when I saw it on the northend bookstands where I do a large part of my reading and practically all my browsing. It was only on the recommendation of some members of my classes who had read the book, that I promised to buy and read a copy.

Maxwell Anderson, who certainly knows better, write the foreword to the book. The government, it seems, last summer gave Mr. Anderson permission to wander at will about Fort Bragg in order to get some material for his new play which opened in Manhattan a couple of weeks ago. While there, Anderson discovered Hargrove, who until his induction into the service, had been a newspaperman in Charlotte, North Carolina. Most of the chapters — I'll call them chapters for lack of something better to term them — were published first in the Charlotte *News,* before they ever found the light of day under the guidance of Henry Holt's publishing house.

Amusing? Yes, some of the chapters are amusing; but part of the joy of the book for me is taken when I read the conversation that Pvt. Hargrove puts into the mouths of his characters. Sergeants, top sergeants in particular, do not talk like those who are trotted out by the author. I know. I well remember several top sergeants who, if they were here this minute, I could cordially boil in oil. Let me show you what I mean; let me quote from Chapter 8:

"I tiptoed into the squadroom so that the sergeant wouldn't notice that I was wearing fatigue clothes. His voice rang out to me as I passed his door, and I slunk in guiltily.

"The sergeant's face showed that he was hurt. 'You were on KP again today, weren't you, Hargrove?'

"I lowered my eyes and scuffed my toe against the floor. 'Yes, sir.'

" 'Oh, I get so discouraged sometimes,' the sergeant said. 'I try so hard to make something of you and what good does it do? Every time I go through the kitchen I see you in there scrubbing the sinks.' "

There you are; that is the kind of dialogue I am referring to. In the first place, I do not believe that any sergeant ever showed by a facial expression that he was hurt. Sergeants are not built that way. I even had some buddies in France during War 1 who believed that sergeants could never be hurt, let alone show their feelings if they were hurt.

Likewise, I must say that I never heard a noncom approach any soldier and remark: "Oh, I get so discouraged sometimes. I try so hard to make something of you, and what good does it do?" But, of course, I served as buck private in War 1. Probably by 1942 sergeants have changed their manner and are dealing with their men a little more lightly.

To me the price of *Private Hargrove* can be found in its last chapter. There the reader has a splendid picture of the well trained men, who as rookies only a few short weeks before, are leaving from the camp station a group of well trained soldiers.

"They pay more attention to the band this time. They know the 'Caisson Song.' They know their own Replacement Center Marching Song, composed by one of their number, a quiet little ex-music teacher named Harvey Bosell. They hum the tune as they board the Shanghai Express.

"An old sergeant, kept in the Replacement Center to train the men whose fathers fought with him a generation ago, stands on the side and watches them with a firm proud look.

" 'Give 'em hell, boys,' he shouts behind them. 'Give 'em hell.' "

But sergeants are sergeants the world over, then and now; and without their rough and picturesque language, we, rookies that we were in 1918, would have been far shabbier soldiers without them.

If you want to read a highly amusing book, look in to a copy of *See Here, Private Hargrove.* I found it good reading even if I did not care for the lady-like language of the sergeants.

THE RAFT

David Lorey, Engr. 1, is the author of the following review of Robert Trumbell's book, *The*

(Continued on page 20)

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ONE second saved in each of the 106 million telephone calls made every day would add up to well over 29,000 hours — would help greatly to keep lines open for vital military and war production calls.

A single second is that important. So answer promptly, giving your location and name, and keep your conversation brief. When making a call, be sure you have the right number—use the directory—call Information only when it's really necessary. And please don't use Long Distance to defense areas unless your call is urgent.

The Bell System has a big job to do. By saving seconds you may make room for a vital war-time call.

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ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

(Continued from page 12)

Raft. Written as part of class assignment in English 413, this review seemed too good to me to be lost. For that reason I am passing it along to readers of *The Bookshelf.*

Mr. Lorey, a first quarter freshman in the College of Engineering, is a graduate of Portsmouth High School. He is working in Ceramics.

The author of *The Raft,* Robert Trumbell, is a newspaperman of Honolulu. He met Pilot Harold Dixon, the spokesman of the trio of heroes, about whom the story is written, at Waikiki. The two men talked for almost twenty-four hours. Dixon related his experiences to Trumbell and the following story is the result.

Three men who scarcely knew each other were assigned to a scout bomber one morning in the Pacific Ocean. These men were Chief Petty Officer Harold Dixon, Tony Pastula, a Polish-American boy who was Dixon's bomber, and Gene Aldrich, a Missouri farm boy who was Dixon's radioman and gunner. They had no idea of the experience which was in store for them, that is, not until they lost their bearings and failed to find their aircraft carrier. As the gas ran out, the men knew that they had a problem on their hands.

Pilot Dixon made a perfect landing on the water, but he knew that the plane would stay afloat for only a few minutes. All planes based on aircraft carriers are land planes. It was a matter of seconds before he and his two comrades were seeking the life raft and emergency supplies. However, the plane sank before emergency rations could be obtained, and the men were left alone on the wide Pacific with a life raft and a few personal possessions. The supplies with which Harold, Tony, and Gene were equipped were not numerous: two life jackets, an automatic pistol with very little ammunition, a can of rubber cement and rubber patching material, a pocket knife, pliers, a mirror, and a police whistle.

The first thing that Pilot Dixon did was to improvise a chart on a life jacket from his knowledge of the surrounding area. Since the men had no food and no water, they suffered terrible hardships. As the days went by, their hopes of rescue by a passing ship waned. Tony and Gene carried on daily conversations about food. This helped to relieve the strain to some degree. Their cramped position in the boat, the blazing sun, and the cold nights caused the men to suffer untold tortures. Their raft was often capsized by storms, but somehow they always managed to right it.

The men resorted to prayer and in answer they received rain. Dixon wasted shells trying to kill birds, but Gene managed to stab a fish. The men ate these fish raw and they left only the bones. They managed to find two cocoanuts floating in the water. These also helped to stave off death. Frequent squalls which capsized the raft caused the men to lose most of their few belongings. The rags used to catch rain and to bail out the raft were one of the losses which the men regretted the most. Dixon devised a sea anchor from a life jacket to prevent contrary winds from blowing the raft off its improvised course.

After thirty-four days of exposure and privations, the men sighted land. Gene was the first to see it. Tony had been the weakest of the three men, especially mentally. However, he now seemed to regain interest in life. They paddled toward the island using shoes for oars.

On the island they were treated kindly by the natives and the resident commissioner. A hurricane struck soon after their arrival and destroyed most of the island's food supply. This did not keep the natives from bringing gifts of food to the sailors. By the end of several weeks of complete rest and wholesome nourishment, the three companions regained some of their former strength. They radioed the Navy Department their outstanding message. In a few days an American warship steamed into port to take them home. The ship also brought food for the famine-stricken island, a deed which saved the island's people.

To my way of thinking, this story is one of the finest pieces of literature to come out of the war. The details are so vivid, and the story is so interesting that I could not put the book down until I had finished it. The bravery and endurance of these American sailors are enough to cause anyone to praise *The Raft.*
